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RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON 8334  
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STATE FOR WHA/CAR WBENT, PRM NIRIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2016

TAGS: PREL PHUM SMIG EAID HA BF

SUBJECT: MIGRATION, DEVELOPMENT AND PREVAL: VIEWS FROM THE HAITIAN AMBASSADOR

REF: NASSAU 657

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs D. Brent Hardt for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Haitian Ambassador to The Bahamas, Louis Joseph, met with Poloff May 11 to discuss Haitian migration and the urgent need to create jobs in Haiti. Joseph rebuffed recent media reports of impending violence by the Haitian immigrant community on Abaco Island, Bahamas, but registered his concern regarding the Bahamian government's treatment of Haitians. Joseph said he was unable to press the Bahamian government on human rights abuses due to the Bahamas' vocal support for Haiti's return to CARICOM. Instead, Joseph pinned his hopes of easing Haitian migration problems in The Bahamas on the new jobs in Haiti, suggesting a regional forum to discuss migration and development. Joseph said foreign factories provided the best opportunity to take advantage of Haiti's main natural resource -- an abundant supply of cheap labor -- and rebuild Haiti's economy. Unless jobs materialize in six-to-twelve months, he said, destabilizing elements in Haiti could undermine Preval's presidency. Recognizing the need for political stability to attract foreign investment, he hoped foreign governments would take decisive action to support immediate job growth in Haiti, noting the importance of pending U.S. HOPE legislation regarding trade preferences and economic reconstruction. To build international support and speed Haiti's reentry into CARICOM, President Preval tentatively plans to visit Nassau in the coming months. END SUMMARY.

Increased Tensions, But No Violence, In Haitian Communities

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¶2. (U) Following the arrest and detention of hundreds of legal Haitian residents in April (reftel) and the alleged beating of a Haitian migrant at the Carmichael Road Detention Immigrant Detention Center (CRIDC) on May 2, local media reported that tensions in Abaco Island's Haitian communities, the Mud and Pigeon Pea, could soon erupt in violence.

¶3. (U) On May 11, Poloff met with Louis Joseph, Haitian Ambassador to The Bahamas, to discuss these concerns and Haitian migration in general. Joseph denied press reports of impending violence in Haitian communities. He said the Haitian community is "deeply concerned about recent events, but the matter is under control." While levels of anger and frustrations have increased, he maintained that "emotions are

being capably managed and there is no increased risk of violence." NOTE: Poloff confirmed Joseph's report with influential Haitian Pastor Meme, a trusted source in the Mud and Pigeon Pea. END NOTE.

¶4. (C) Joseph did not believe the underlying problem, discrimination against persons of Haitian origin, is being appropriately addressed. On May 8, he delivered a diplomatic note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressing his concerns regarding the arrests of legal Haitians and the conditions at CRIDC, but said he was unable to press the issue too hard for fear of losing the Bahamas' vocal support for Haiti's return to CARICOM. As such, Joseph thanked Post for its attention to Haitian human rights issues and requested our continued assistance.

#### Jobs in Haiti Key to Migration Problem

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¶5. (C) More broadly, Joseph suggested a regional migration summit to emphasize that the problems faced by the Dominican Republic, The Bahamas, the U.S. and others are multilateral issues with common causes and solutions. Specifically, he hoped regional dialogue on migration would include recognition that cooperative foreign assistance in the economic development of Haiti was the best solution to the problem of Haitian migration.

¶6. (C) Joseph said establishment of factories in Haiti offered the strongest hope for Haitian jobs, the rebuilding of Haiti's economy and curbing illegal immigration. Haiti's main national resource -- an abundant supply of cheap labor -- would be an asset to foreign factory owners, particularly in the manufacturing and garment industries. Joseph noted

the proximity of Haiti to key markets in North and South America currently relying on cheap labor in Asia, calling the current underdevelopment of Haiti an opportunity to reduce costs and curb Chinese factory dominance.

#### U.S. Support of Preval Key to Jobs in Haiti

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¶7. (C) However, Joseph recognized foreign business reluctance to return to Haiti until Preval demonstrates an ability to maintain security and stability for foreign investment. Calling the issue "a chicken and egg" dilemma, Joseph emphasized the importance of the international community, including especially CARICOM and the United States, in helping bring business to Haiti. Joseph specifically mentioned the vital importance of HOPE legislation pending before Congress in rebuilding Haiti's economy.

¶8. (C) Citing unnamed Haitian sources, Joseph reported that those in Haiti pressing for the return of Aristide are positioning themselves to negotiate with Preval for positions of power. He said Preval's ability to provide jobs, particularly in the next six-to-twelve months, would give him sufficient popular support to thwart these persons and others seeking to destabilize Haiti for their own ends.

¶9. (C) Joseph said Preval tentatively plans a trip to Nassau in the coming months to increase Haitian involvement in multilateral fora and build regional support for Haitian redevelopment. Joseph expects Preval to focus primarily on Haiti's return to CARICOM rather than migration or human rights issues.

¶10. (C) COMMENT: Discrimination against Haitians, and Bahamians of Haitian origin, remains a serious problem in The Bahamas. Increased tensions in the Haitian community, the Bahamian Government's new "get tough" policy on immigration (reftel), and the Haitian embassy's caution in pressing human rights issues create a potentially volatile mixture. While the situation remains calm at the moment, further aggressive action against Haitians in the run-up to elections could lead to violent outburst. Ambassador Joseph's formal complaint against recent actions makes clear there are limits to the

Haitian tolerance of what is seen as discriminatory or  
heavy-handed action. END COMMENT.  
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